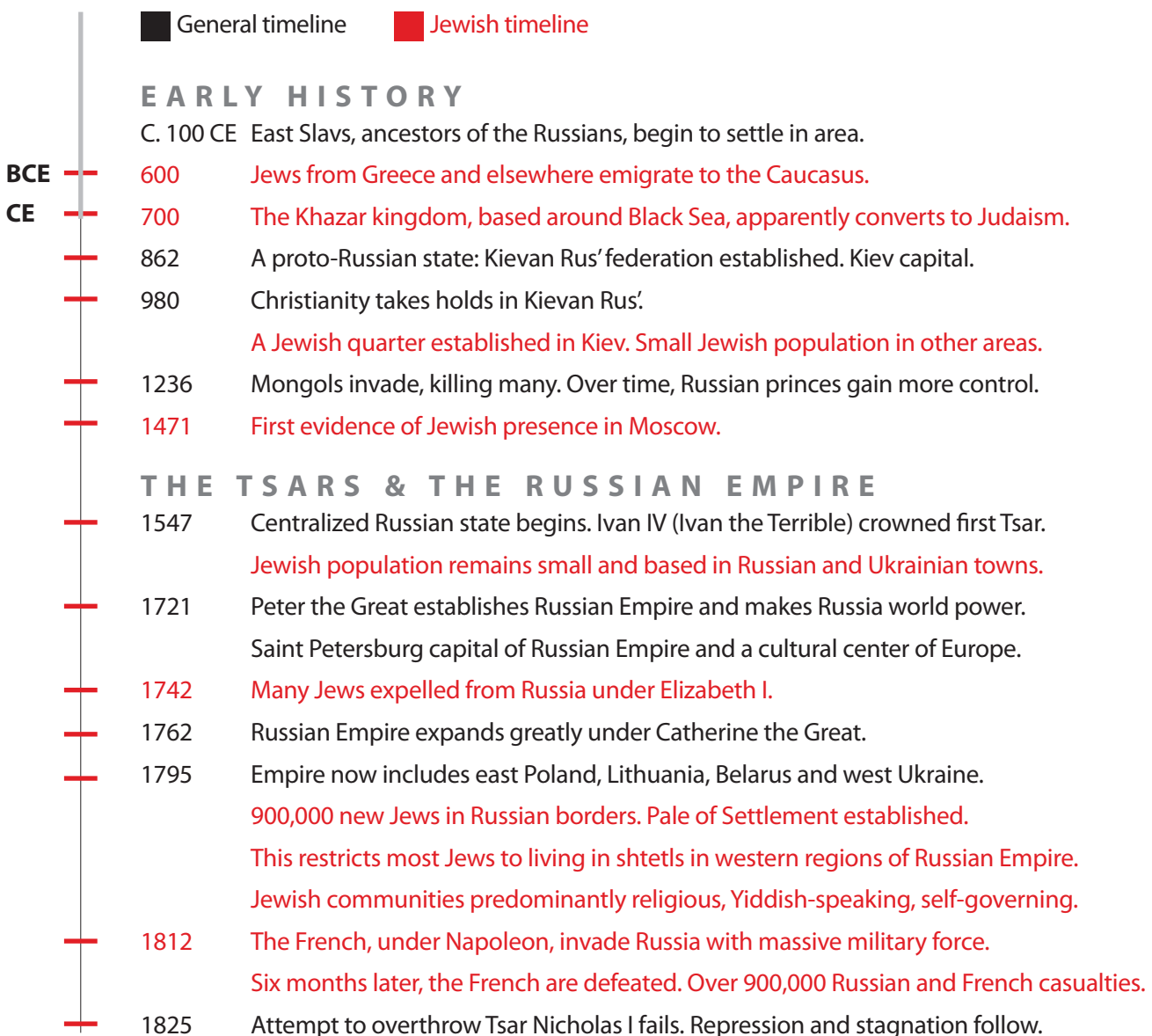




RUSSIA THROUGH THE AGES

Winston Churchill described Russia as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery insider an enigma.” This timeline provides a few clues to help you decipher the riddle of Russia and the story of its Jewish community. Many of these events revolve around Russia’s often tragic and brutal politics, but don’t forget that this is also a nation famous for its culture and “Russian soul.” It’s also a vast land with a complex past so many of the dates and figures here are approximate only.



- 1850 Persecution of Jews, including forced conscription into army.
Jewish population 2.35 million and growing fast due to high birth rates.
- 1861 Alexander II abolishes serfdom in Russia, eases persecution of Jews.
- 1869 Tolstoy writes War and Peace.
- 1881 Opposition to tsarist rule growing. Alexander II assassinated.
Jews blamed, starting a wave of pogroms and state discrimination.
- 1897 Majority of world's Jews live in Russian Empire.
5.2 million Jews in Russia; 94% live in Pale of Settlement.
Increasing secular education and use of Russian language.
Jews involved in social democratic, radical, Zionist, and Bundist movements.
- 1905 Russian defeat in war with Japan weakens Tsarist rule.

THE RED REVOLUTION

- 1914 Russia fights World War I against Germany and Austro-Hungary Empire.
Loses millions of troops and control over Poland and much of its western empire.
A people on the move. Two million Jews leave Russia, mainly for US, 1880-1920.
Pale of Settlement restrictions end as Jews flee east to Russian towns & cities.
- 1917 February Revolution. Tsar abdicates. Provisional govt. calls for elections.
Lenin and Bolshevik revolutionaries return from exile.
October Revolution: Bolsheviks (renamed the Communist Party) seize control.
- 1918 The Red Army and secret police established. Capital moves to Moscow.
Russia quits WWI. Communists execute last Tsar, Nicholas II and his family.
Civil war begins between red Communist rulers and "white" opponents.
31,000 Jews killed in pogroms 1917-1922.
- 1919 Lenin condemns anti-Semitism. Civil restrictions on Jews loosened.
Jewish involvement in Communist Party increases.
- 1922 Communists win civil war. Strict Communist control over politics and economy.
Many class enemies killed or exiled. Famines kill millions more.
Anti-religious laws and policies, including against Judaism.

LIFE AND DEATH UNDER STALIN

- 1924 Lenin dies. Stalin takes control and will bring dictatorship to new levels.
- 1926 State pushes Yiddish and socialist culture for Jews, hostile to Judaism & Zionism.
Jewish population drops to 2.7 million due to border changes, emigration.
- 1929 Birobidzhan in far east promoted as Jewish "homeland." Few Jews move there.
Instead, Russian Jews increasingly urban and educated.
- 1932 Collectivization of farms leads to starvation, killing 5-7 million.
- 1936 Peak of Stalin's Great Purge of "opponents." Around 1 million executions.
The Gulags: Huge numbers sent to prison labor camps.
Many Jews including writers, Bundists, and communists killed in purges.
Russification: Govt. push Russian language, not Yiddish, for Jews.

WORLD WAR TWO AND THE HOLOCAUST

- 1939 Soviet-German nonaggression pact.
Secret agreement divides Eastern Europe between Soviets and Germans.
- 1941 4.85 million Jews in Soviet Union, about 30% of world Jewish population.

- Nazis invade Soviet Union. Conquer much of Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states.
Three million Soviet Jews under Nazi-occupation. Mass killings begin.
- 1942 The Battle of Stalingrad turns tide of WWII against Germany.
- 1945 Red Army pushes through Eastern Europe to Berlin. Germany surrenders.
Total Soviet losses during WWII estimated at 25-27 million.
Two million Soviet Jews killed in Holocaust.
Over 142,000 Jews killed while fighting for the Red Army.
USSR downplays Holocaust and presents it as part of anti-Soviet aggression.

SUPERPOWER & DICTATORSHIP

- 1946 Soviet Union occupies and control much of Eastern Europe. Cold War begins.
Mass executions and imprisonment against Stalin's "opponents" resume.
Many Jews killed, including prominent writers and intellectuals.
- 1947 USSR supports UN Palestine partition plan. Allows arms sales to State of Israel.
- 1948 Soviet hostility to Israel and any form of Jewish culture in USSR grows.
- 1952 Doctors' Plot: Jewish doctors accused of trying to assassinate Soviet leaders.
Stalin apparently preparing for mass Jewish deportation and purge.
- 1953 Stalin dies. New leadership halt purge and execute head of secret police Beria.

THE RISE & FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION

- 1956 Khrushchev in control. Stalin's excesses denounced. End of mass executions.
- 1957 USSR support for Arab states in conflict with Israel deepens.
- 1959 Following Holocaust, Jewish population has declined to 2.79 million.
- 1961 Soviets put the first human into space. Dancer Rudolf Nureyev defects to US.
- 1962 The Cuban Missile Crisis brings USSR and US to the brink of nuclear war.
- 1964 Khrushchev deposed. Brezhnev ushers in long period of stagnation.
- 1965 **Only about 60 synagogues still active in all Soviet Union.**
- 1967 Soviets strengthen refusal to allow Jewish emigration after Six Day War.
- 1968 Russia invades Czechoslovakia to stamp out reform efforts in its Eastern bloc.
- 1970 **9 Soviet Jews hijack plane to protest persecution.**
Some Jewish emigration to US and Israel allowed following Western pressure.
- 1979 Soviets begin disastrous war in Afghanistan. Economic decline deepens.
Jewish population dropping with low birth rates, emigration, and assimilation.
- 1985 A reformer in the Kremlin: Gorbachev launches glasnost (openness).
- 1986 Economic and political reforms, improved relations with West.
Refusenik Natan Sharansky released from prison.
Migration restrictions end. Mass migration to Israel and elsewhere.
- 1989 The Berlin Wall falls. Cold War and Soviet control of Eastern Europe ends.
Last Soviet census finds 1.48 million Jews.
- 1990 The USSR coming apart: Soviet republics declare independence.
- 1991 Failed coup against Gorbachev by Communist hardliners.
Boris Yeltsin assumes control of new Russian state. The USSR dissolved.

RUSSIA AFTER COMMUNISM

- 1991 Shock therapy: Economic deregulation and social instability.
A Wild West of Capitalism: Cheap sale of state assets creates oligarchs.

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- 2000
 - Rise in crime, poverty, and sense of Russian powerlessness.
 - Resurgent Russian militarism indicated by war in Chechnya.
 - Former KGB operative Vladimir Putin wins presidential elections.
 - Re-establishes greater control over media and regions.
 - Natural gas and oil sales boosts economy and growth in consumerism.
 - Increased efforts to revitalize Russian Jewish life.
 - Despite growth of Chabad movement, most Jews are secular.
 - Great majority of children born to a Jewish parent are from mixed marriages.
 - 2002
 - Jewish population in Russia estimated at 265,000.
 - 2012
 - Winter Olympics in Sochi.
 - 2010
 - Russian population: 143,097,209. Ninth most populous country, largest by area.
 - Jewish population, estimated at 265,000 in 2002 declines to 160,000.
 - 2012
 - The Moscow Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center opens.
 - 2014
 - Russian troops and supporters take over part of Ukraine.
 - 2016
 - Russia accused of interfering with US elections.
 - Moscow and Saint Petersburg remain main centers of Jewish life.